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ABSTRACT

Award-winning economic education projects devised by Alaska teachers included three elementary (K-6) projects and three second level (7-12) ones. Faith Greenough's students (Chinook Elementary School, Anchorage) compared Tlingit traditional and market economies in Alaska, so economics became an integrated part of elementary instruction. Marie Olsen (Fort Yukon School) used a classroom store, "Fairyland Market," to help children understand economic concepts and the function of money, be aware of effects of advertising and the importance of making choices and practice math and language skills. Phil Logan's Gladys Wood Aluminum Can Company (Gladys Wood Elementary School, Anchorage) collected aluminum cans to sell for recycling, with goals of teaching economic concepts through practical business activities, emphasizing the work ethic, earning money, and promoting conservation awareness. Charles Mattioli (Ben Eielson High School, Fairbanks) taught students financial planning through study of inflation, investment options, taxes, insurance, and investment planning. Joyce Muehlenbach-Ower (East Anchorage High School) concentrated on housing rental to teach basic economic concepts, survival skills, and costs of economic independence. Marcia Keyes and Linda Thibodeau (Ryan Junior High School, Fairbanks) created an imaginary crisis that cut Fairbanks off from the world, to introduce students to the Fairbanks and Alaska interior economies. (MH)

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Economic Education Experiences of Award Winning Alaska Teachers 1983

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Edited by Monica Thomas

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CONTENTS

	Page
Editor's Comments	ii
Elementary Level: K-6	
Traditional and Market Economies in Alaska - Faith Greenough (First Place)	1
Fairyland Market - Marie Olsen (Second Place)	5
The Gladys Wood Aluminum Can Company - Phil Logan (Third Place)	9
Second Level: 7-12	
Planning Your Investment Portfolio - Charles Mattioli (First Place)	12
Movin' Out - Joyce Muehlenbach-Ower (Second Place)	17
Interior Crisis - Marcia Keyes and Linda Thibodeau (Third Place)	20

Editor's Comments

1. Alternative economic systems in Alaska are compared.

2. The world of make-believe assists entrepreneurship.

3. Aluminum cans teach business practices and earn profits.

4. Long term investment decisions become real to students.

5. The cost of economic independence is analyzed.

6. A hypothetical crisis becomes a vehicle for decision-making.

As a result of the Alaska Center for Economic Education and its support from the Alaska Council on Economic Education, activities like the above are occurring all over the state. Alaska students are learning that one of the things that makes our country great is its economic system--and that each of us has a part in it.

Monica E. Thomas

To Our Readers

The reports published in this book are condensed versions of the original projects. In fact, some of the materials submitted cannot be presented in print form or even summarized easily. The complete reports are stored at the Alaska Center for Economic Education, University of Alaska, 601-A Gruening Building, 314 Chandalar Avenue South, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701, (907) 474-6520. Additional copies of this publication can be obtained from the above address. In all cases, the economic ideas remain the property of the respective authors for the purpose of professional, or commercial recognition.

TRADITIONAL AND MARKET ECONOMIES IN ALASKA

An Intermediate Level Economics Unit

Faith Greenough

Chinook Elementary School - Anchorage, Alaska

Introduction

Two main considerations guided and influenced the development of my economics project. The first was that in the elementary school, economics should become a real part of the basic instruction, rather than another "add-on" subject. This introduces students to economic concepts throughout the year in various curriculum areas in many contexts, rather than a one-shot easily forgotten approach.

The other consideration was to develop an instructional plan that might be useful to many, if not all, intermediate level classrooms in Alaska. Most Alaskan teachers already include some studies of Alaska Native Cultures in their curriculum. Therefore, I chose to develop specific economic concepts within the Alaskan Culture Units, which I already use. The units provide an opportunity to compare a traditional or subsistence economy to the market economy in Anchorage today. Students become involved in the economic concepts as they relate to their own lives.

Goals

The goals of this project were:

1. To teach the following economic concepts:

   Wants and needs
   Scarcity and choices
   Opportunity cost
   Goods and services
   Specialization
   Markets
   Resources

2. To apply these concepts to students' lives.

3. To discover how two different economic systems solve the problem of scarcity.

Procedure

Pre-Test

Before introducing any of the lessons, I administered as a pre-test the Basic Economics Test (BET), which is sponsored by the Joint Council on Economic Education. This is an achievement test on the basic principles of economics. Since the test was designed for grades 4-6, many items represent concepts not included at the fourth grade level. Therefore, pre- and post-tests were compared for items representing selected concepts, as well as the full test. The pre-test was administered in December and the post-test in February.

Introduction to Economics

I introduced the word Economics by brainstorming for related vocabulary. On a large sheet of butcher paper, I wrote MONEY to begin. As students suggested related words, I added them to the sheet. I continued encouraging suggestions until someone said ECONOMICS, which was placed at the top for a title. As we learned new vocabulary during the unit, words were added to the sheet by a student who remembered the word from the lesson when given a clue or definition.

Introduction to Economic Concepts

Students were already familiar with the term "basic needs" as we had used this in our cultural studies throughout the year. To develop the idea of unlimited wants and limited resources, each child was given $25.00 in play money. I have a large poster board display of 20-25 items currently popular with students this age. Prices range from $1 - $15.00. Students decided how they would spend their $25.00. Then they thought of one or more items they would have liked, but could not buy because of limited money. They listed these items and wrote "This is my opportunity cost." We also discussed the application of choice to use of time. Thus they learned that time and resources are limited.

I used McDonald's Action Pack to introduce concepts of production and consumption of goods and services. I showed the filmstrip "Making Choices (Pied Piper Productions) and developed additional worksheets on wants and needs, and opportunity cost.

Economics in Alaskan Culture Units

After introducing the basic economic concepts, and applying them to the students' own lives, the Tlingit - Haida Culture of Southeast Alaska unit commenced. Materials used were from the Anchorage School District's units for the fourth grade. The book Kahtahah, by Francis Lackey Paul was the main text. Other materials included maps, resource cards, large pictures, and the Tlingit Trade Game.

Before introducing Kahtahah, I helped the students become familiar with the basic geography and climate affecting the resources and customs of the Tlingits. My class then followed a yearly cycle with the child Kahtahah as she and her clan lived a traditional life style.

Included in the lessons were discussions of how a traditional life style differs from our market economy.

The Tlingit Trade Game is a board game designed to acquaint students with the trade system existing in Southeast Alaska before contact with Europeans. The Tlingits were not only participants, but middlemen who moved goods between northern and southern groups, coastal and inland dwellers. The game accurately depicts commodities traded, the people with whom they traded, trade routes used, and the relative scarcity of goods.

Students learned that Tlingits traded because they had wants not available in their own area. They traded in spring and summer when there were surplus goods and travel was easy. They traded with Haida, Tsimshians, Athabascans and in rare cases Eskimos.

Students made a list of wants for themselves and their family and a list they think may have been typical for Kahtahah and her family.

Discussion brought out how our lists were generally longer than ones for Kahtahah and her family.

Shirley Kendall, a Tlingit who grew up in Hoonah, was a guest speaker in our class. She discussed growing up in small island communities and going to fish camp for the summer. She brought out how many needs were met by doing it themselves and purchases were few. All members of the family had an important job to do, especially during the summer.

Students asked many questions about her life as a child and seemed very interested and amazed at some of the differences from their own lives.

As a follow-up activity, students drew pictures of one part of her life they particularly enjoyed hearing about.

Another follow-up lesson was the film: An Economic Model; A Fishing Village. This was a reinforcement of ideas portrayed by Mrs. Kendall.

Evaluation

I used two evaluative procedures to complete this project. One was to administer the BET for a second time. Since this project included only some of the objectives measured by the BET, scores are reported in two ways. For the entire test the average score increased from 43.4% on the pre-test to 60.5% on the post-test. On those 14 items which specifically measure the concepts included in this project, the average score increased from 55% on the pre-test to 84.3% on the post-test. On the pre-test several students had 79% on the selected items. However, on the post-test, there were six students with 100%.

The second means of evaluation was a class project, making a large two-part mural. One part depicted a Tlingit village showing various ways a traditional economy meets its wants and needs. The second part was a composite scene of Anchorage today and how a market economy can meet its wants and needs.

Before beginning we discussed as a class what things needed to be included on each part of the mural. The economic activities chosen to be portrayed for the Tlingit side were: housing, a fish camp, berry-picking, hunting, tanning and skin sewing, basket weaving, carving canoes and totems trading, and using wild plants in foods.

Scenes chosen for portraying the variety of goods and services in a market economy were: large department stores, shopping malls, small markets, entertainment, various homestyles (single, apartment, trailer) and recreational activities which provide food as well as sport (hunting and fishing).

FAIRYLAND MARKET

A Primary Level Economics Unit

Marie Olsen

Fort Yukon School - Fort Yukon, Alaska

ACTIVITIES IN PRODUCING, EXCHANGING AND DISTRIBUTING GOODS

Goals

The goals of this project were:

1. To help children understand selected economic concepts.
2. To help children be aware of the effects of advertising.
3. To help children understand the functions of money.
4. To help children know the importance of making choices.
5. To help children develop an appreciation of the free enterprise system.
6. To provide opportunities for children to practice selected math and language skills which can be related to economic concepts.

Key Economic Concepts

1. Money is helpful as a medium of exchange and as a measure of the value of things that we sell and buy.
2. Money can be saved for future use.
3. We use money to pay for needs and wants.
4. We use money to pay for goods and services.
5. We usually have to work or make something to get money.
6. We can't always have everything we want.
7. There may be times when we have money but there is little to buy with it.
8. A market is a place where we buy and sell goods.

9. The market value of goods is based on supply and demand.

10. When prices are low people buy more if they need and want the product.

11. Demand is the desire for a product and the willingness to pay and the ability to pay.

12. Long ago people got many of the things they needed or wanted by barter.

13. People use barter to get some of the things they need nowadays.

14. Sometimes people buy things because of ads.

Fairyland Market: A Classroom Store

By using a project such as "Fairyland Market," children were afforded opportunities for extended experiences with math, social studies and language skills. The activities helped the children to learn economic principles more efficiently and also give needed practice and interesting repetition to learning tasks. Learning was a pleasure when the skills were practiced in unusual and interesting ways.

This unit included some selected teaching techniques to which an element of play was added. Sometimes an activity that is valuable for one group needed much change in order to be worthwhile for another group of students.

Graphic materials were teacher and student constructed. Diagrams, charts, price lists and ads were appropriate materials. A large picture made with chalk, crayon or paint to represent Fairyland made the store attractive. Crepe paper streamers were also appealing to children.

Students may wish to choose a different name for their store. Some names my students have previously used include: Green Owl Store and Fairies' Kitchen.

The snacks we used in the market were small in size and not very sweet. These included graham crackers, sugar cookies, gingersnap cookies, Ritz Crackers, Oyster Crackers and cereals such as Life, Wheat Chex and Rice Chex. Nuts, raisins, marshmallows and popcorn were also used.

The students enjoyed decorating the snacks. The cookies can be made at school or the teacher may prefer to bring them ready for the children to frost and decorate. These snacks had names such as Beep-Beeps, June Bug Snaps, Rosebud Bars, and Fairy Rings.

The "Fairy Money" that we used for buying snacks at the market was printed on onionskin paper which was cut to a size of 2½ X 4 inches. This paper was suitable because it does not tear easily and it can be used over and over. We stamped the pink papers with a penny and a rabbit, the yellow ones with a nickel and a star and the white coupons with a squirrel and a dime.

The students needed a special place to keep their money. Envelopes or a homemade billfold are useful. Billfolds were made with colored felt or plastic.

Students earned money by:

1. Coming to school on time.

2. Keeping neat clothes closets.

3. Working with others to get things ready for selling, working at the market or cleaning after the market closes.

4. Completing math, reading, social studies or other assignments.

5. Good behavior.

Additional activities through the market included:

1. Mail order shopping - to encourage writing clarity and teach price comparison and choices.

2. Fairy basket monopoly - to practice vocabulary words and math facts.

3. Buying without money - to understand barter and market economies.

4. The storekeeper game - to establish correct expressions and teach selling procedures.

Marketing Activities Using Real Money

After students have practiced buying, selling and working at the Fairyland Market there may be interest and value in setting up a Snack Shop for selling items to make a profit.

Students need to learn of snack foods available that are nourishing, not too sweet, will be easy to sell and can be sold to earn a profit. Our students enjoy banana chips, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, apple rings, nut mixes, dried fruit and peanuts.

The students need guidance in pricing the items to sell in order to gain a profit. They also need advice in ways of measuring and packaging. The class should decide on something useful to buy with the money earned.

Final Thoughts

The activities should take about two weeks, or longer if not used every day. Some of the materials can be used during the math and language arts classes.

Some conditions the students experienced during the project were:

1. On some days everyone bought what they wanted.

2. One day the fancy cookies did not meet demand.

3. On Friday you could buy some leftover items at reduced prices.

4. One day everyone had plenty of money but there was little to buy.

5. On some days the students who saved money from the previous day had enough money for higher priced snacks.

6. On some days you did not have enough money to buy one of each item so you had to make a choice.

THE GLADYS WOOD ALUMINUM CAN COMPANY

An Elementary Level Economics Unit

Phil Logan

Gladys Wood Elementary School - Anchorage, Alaska

Introduction

The Gladys Wood Aluminum Can Company was launched as a penny-stock company in September, 1982. It was a year-long economics project involving the collection of aluminum cans which would be sold to the Anchorage Recycling Center. The project was an ambitious one, but all that was needed for success was a little initiative, drive and determination. The class was encouraged to participate in the proposed recycling business by purchasing shares with aluminum cans. There would be a "big payday in May" when all shareholders would be paid in cash.

Goals

The major goals of the project were:

1. To provide real, true-to-life business experiences.
2. To teach economic concepts through practical, daily business activities.
3. To emphasize the work ethic of the American private enterprise system.
4. To earn money.
5. To promote conservation awareness through the recycling of the aluminum cans.

The Company

As word about the G.W.A.C. Company spread throughout the school, the school staff, parents and pupils responded in a most enthusiastic and supportive manner. G.W.A.C. was off and running!

The Anchorage Recycling Center welcomed the fledgling company with open arms, established an account for G.W.A.C. and suggested that the recycling efforts be expanded to include newspapers. The company did encourage all its shareholders to deliver their old bundled newspapers directly to the Anchorage Recycling Center and thereby increase G.W.A.C. profits. Although the price of recycled newspapers fluctuated throughout the year, significant profits were gained through their collection.

To handle an anticipated large volume of cans, very specific packaging and delivery details were set forth. (1) Only aluminum cans would be accepted. (2) Cans would have to be crushed to facilitate their storage. (3) Packaging could be in either paper or plastic containers. (4) Shareholders had to label their containers with their names and the number of cans contained therein. (5) Participants' can deliveries to the classroom were to be made only before or after school or during recesses.

In reponse to the interest and enthusiasm which G.W.A.C. engendered, the company expanded its operation to include anyone in the Gladys Wood School who wished to purchase shares with aluminum cans. The campaign to enlist new stockholders was announced in a schoolwide newsletter. Realizing that additional customers would entail a much heavier workload in processing the influx of cans, the fourth grade class became charter members of the organization. Thereafter, they would be able to earn additional shares as brokers.

As the young G.W.A.C. entrepreneurs became more involved in their economic learning experiences, they were eager to hear from someone with a business background in the real corporate world. In mid-October a guest speaker visited the classroom and spoke for an hour about the economic principles of small businesses. He pointed out the similarities of the G.W.A.C. Company's structure and practices to those of a real business. The pupils were most interested in his explanations of pertinent aspects of the American private enterprise system.

During the following weeks, growth was phenomenal as numbers of shareholders and company assets spiraled upward. The time arrived for G.W.A.C. to expand its operations into other business ventures. In December a newsletter distributed to Anchorage teachers by McDonald's Restaurants described a fund-raising offer in which school groups could purchase McDonald's all-you-can-eat hotcake tickets for $.50 and resell them for $1.00. Acting quickly to take advantage of this serendipital opportunity, the G.W.A.C. board of directors established, in early January, 1983, a subsidiary called the G.W.A.C. Sales Company, and appointed two G.W.A.C. vice-presidents as director and assistant director of the new sales operation. The G.W.A.C. Sales Company's marketing program was patterned as closely as possible after real business practices. Separate and special records and accounting procedures were set up. Only G.W.A.C. shareholders were elegible to be sellers of the McDonald's hotcake tickets.

Because of popular demand, the G.W.A.C. project will be revived next year. Pupils will be encouraged to continue collecting cans during the summer with the options of accumulating them and bringing them to school in September, or delivering them to the Anchorage Recycling Center and crediting them to the G.W.A.C. account, subsequently receiving share credits by turning in their receipts in September.

Some Final Thoughts

Participating in the G.W.A.C. Company and its subsidiary G.W.A.C. Sales provided pupils with many practical experiences concerning the realities of operating a business. G.W.A.C. employees learned firsthand about the physical labor, paperwork and public relations efforts involved in a commercial enterprise. Working in a responsible, cooperative and efficient manner taught them the value of on-the-job teamwork and good interpersonal relationships. The importance of accurate records and accounting practices was demonstrated daily by insistence upon following established company procedures. Stockholders were kept informed by the periodic issuing of individual accounting statements and shareholders' reports. Friendliness and fairness in dealing with all customers were emphasized. Public relations were conducted through the advertising techniques of posters, newsletters and intercom announcements.

Planning and decision-making skills were fostered by G.W.A.C. stockholder referendums and board meetings. Shareholders shaped company policy and set long-range goals. They enlarged upon successful practices and eliminated those that were inadequate.

Parental support and community response to this economics teaching endeavor was very positive. Some parents expressed the viewpoint that their children's experiences in managing and operating the G.W.A.C. Company and the G.W.A.C. Sales Company was just like having a real job. One father even went so far as to say that he believed the work experience for his son was superior to having a paper route or similar type of actual job in the community. Primary teachers reported that a number of their pupils caught the G.W.A.C. fever and seem to have grasped the concept of stock ownership value. The concensus was almost unanimous that the project stimulated a great amount of interest in basic economics.

PLANNING YOUR INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO

A High School Level Economics Unit

Charles Mattioli

Ben Eielson High School - Fairbanks, Alaska

Introduction

While the school system places great emphasis on its task of preparing young people in the skills needed for modern living and for earning a living, there is an educational void in the area of investment, long range financial planning, and the wide array of institutional services and information available in reaching financial goals. The average student will see close to $700,000 pass through his hands during a lifetime (this figure is not adjusted for potential inflation). Inadequate financial planning causes innumerable hardships, marriage problems, and insecure retirement years in our society. This $700,000 earnings stream trickles away and vanishes without properly meeting a person's needs or wants unless planning occurs and choices are made--rational choices that fit individaul goals and temperaments.

Goals

The goals of this project were:

1. To introduce the student to lifetime financial planning techniques and understand the trade-offs that must occur between present consumption and investment for the future.

2. To make students aware and understand the wide variety of options that could become part of their investment portfolio--their characteristics and advantages and disadvantages in terms of income, liquidity, and safety as well as performances in various economic conditions.

3. To have students become familiar with the institutions and services that are involved in financial planning--realtors, brokers, insurance agents, banks, credit unions, small business, etc.

4. To develop skills in using tables and graphs and using sources of information particularly valuable to financial planning.

Teaching Experience

My most important objective in beginning the unit was to have the students become more aware of their economic needs and goals both in the short term and the long term. I used several strategies to get their attention and interest in that regard. In one they had to find a picture to symbolize a short range goal and then analyze how they might plan to achieve it. (See handout "Seeing a Goal and Getting There.") We then broke up into groups to discuss economic needs and goals of people at various stages of their lives. Each group contributed their suggestions to a life cycle line or spectrum that became a composite of economic goals over a lifetime. It was important for them to note and discuss the variety of goals over a lifetime and the changes that occur with time in terms of the new kinds of goals that become more important and the income pattern of families and individuals as they mature. On about the fourth day the students began to work on some hypothetical cases of individuals and their goals. The students worked in small groups and had to come up with planning options and be able to state the trade-offs that were involved in pursuing goals (see strategy two).

For the next three or four days the students read the first chapter of Vanita VanCaspel's The New Money Dynamics called "Dear Investor." It is a step by step introduction to financial planning pitfalls and techniques. The students were required to answer a work sheet which entailed using a number of tables and formulas used in financial planning. For example, if they thought they could retire on $1,000 of today's dollars per month and live comfortably, how many dollars would they need per month in 35 or 40 years to have that equivalent purchasing power. They had to consider different inflation scenarios, and even the mild ones shocked them. They learned the power of time and compound interest in accumulating money by using various tables. At the conclusion of the week's work they had to apply these skills and concepts to a personal plan for financial security for themselves.

In the next phase of this unit we spent some time discussing investment goals--income, growth, and stability--especially in the context that a variety of investment options would have to be investigated to satisfy all these goals. We developed an evaluation grid for investments with important criteria that needed to be used in investment decision-making. The students practiced using them on a group of common investments they were given information about.

With the need for financial planning established and some basic concepts and considerations behind them, the students were now ready to look at a wide variety of investment options and to examine some comprehensive strategies for planning. The students studied a series of videotapes on investment planning that gave an overview of investment options and strategies. They examined guidelines a local broker uses with his clients.

About this time I had representatives from a local bank and credit union talk to the classes about some of the services of their respective institutions and provide up-to-date information about types of investments available at that time. A representative from Foster and Marshall gave a two-hour seminar on securities, limited partnerships, investment strategies and considerations for

various investment markets. There was a positive reaction on the part of many students. Some pursued their interests by a follow-up visit to the downtown offices. Meanwhile we embarked on a study of the securities market through a study program put out by the New York Stock Exchange. I had a fellow teacher who had many years of experience with the market talk to the class about his experience. Students were introduced to various sources of information to guide their decision making and learned to interpret the financial page of the newspaper. For one project they had to keep records of stocks they "invested" in for three weeks.

An important part in investment planning is taking taxing policies into consideration. I invited a local tax consultant in, but he had to cancel due to a family emergency. In his place I carried some basic information about tax policies and tax forms to them. We considered investment options that had special tax advantages. They learned what effective yield meant regarding taxes and how marginal tax rates are important factors in decision making, particularly up here in Alaska where incomes are very high. Students had to figure out after tax yeilds on a variety of investments.

The last segment of this unit was devoted to insurance--the characteristics of different policies for both life and property types. Besides mastering some basic vocabulary in insurance, students had to work out auto insurance problems, determine factors where they lived that affected property insurance rates, and make comparisons of returns in various life insurance policies.

This unit was concluded by having the students prepare and turn in a book on investment planning which included all of their papers, tests, handouts, charts, tables, graphs, etc. This would become for them a basic reference for future use. Included in it were many tables and information sheets that competent planners use in assessing individual financial situations and criteria used in weighing investment choices. Their final project was in fact, I hope, the beginning of their financial planning.

Evaluation

1. Teacher made quizzes and tests.

2. Standardized test on the securities market produced by the New York Stock Exchange.

3. Classroom problems and assignments.

4. Project assignments:

   A. Tracking stock prices and recording them for 15 days.
   B. Reading a financial magazine such as Forbes, Money, etc.

5. At the completion of the unit students turn in a guide to financial planning. It contains the following:

   A. an attractive cover designed and labeled (10 points).
   B. a table of contents (5 points).
   C. class notes (15 points).
   D. evaluations of investment options (15 points).
   E. reports pertaining to resource people (10 points).
   F. projects and returned assignments (10 points).
   G. media articles related to investment (15 points).
   H. well organized appendix containing tables, charts and other investment handouts (20 points).

Applicability to Other Schools and Courses

This unit in whole or in part can be used quite effectively in other courses than economics. Parts of it which rely heavily on the use of graphs, tables, and interest computation could be used in math courses, particularly those such as Practical Math or Consumer Mathematics that emphasize the practical application of mathematics. It certainly would also fit within the goals of home economic classes which more and more are emphasizing family living skills and making it on your own. Ideally this unit could be expanded into a full semester elective course. I had many students make this request to me.

The Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend program, the relatively new IRA accounts, the crisis in the social security system, and deregulation of financial institutions has heightened peoples' awareness on personal financial investment options. The need for increased knowledge in this area becomes more keenly felt in troubled economic times. Inflation and recession have made most of us more sensitive to the need for wise financial planning. The simple savings account in the neighborhood bank can no longer be all we need to have in planning our future. The world of finance is more sophisticated than it ever has been. It is also more available to the average person than ever before as most institutions broaden and extend their offerings to people.

Another important fact of American life demands attention in this area. Americans are living longer than ever before. Our population as a whole is getting older. The fact is that many Americans, not just a few, will live ten, fifteen, or more years after they retire. The quality of life in those "golden" years depend substantially on the investment planning that occurs during the earning years.

The need for this type of unit in Alaska's rural schools is also crucial. Alaskan Natives through their regional and village corporations have huge capital and resource investments to consider. The quality of their life depends on the wisdom with which they handle their present assets. Shares in their corporations will go public in the early 1990's. Thus, their need to be knowledgeable and sophisticated in the world of finance is not a luxury, but a necessity. This unit could be expanded and designed to meet the particular needs of Alaskan rural residents.

The responsibility for educating people in financial planning falls squarely upon our public education system. There is no other institution that presently exists to take on the responsibility. It is not a question of if such responsibility will come to the schools, but rather when and how. This unit can be a starting point to integrate these economic concepts in courses presently taught or to develop entirely new ones.

MOVIN' OUT

A High School Level Economics Unit

Joyce Muehlenbach-Ower

East Anchorage High School - Anchorage, Alaska
(School-Within-a-School)

Introduction

Moving out from the family home and living on one's own seems to be of high interest to most high school juniors and seniors. I decided to capitalize on this interest to teach some basic economic concepts and survival skills to students in my Personal Finance classes. Since virtually all of the students will have to rent their first home-away-from-home, I restricted the unit to rental housing.

Goals

Each student was expected to:

1. Be able to evaluate the costs involved when a decision is made (opportunity cost).
2. Be able to identify the economic problem as being one of scarcity, requiring choice.
3. Be able to delineate the alternatives/options that exist when a choice is made.
4. Be able to use a systematic decision-making process to determine the best choice after comparing alternatives and criteria.
5. Be able to identify the different rental housing alternatives that exist in the community.
6. Be able to name at least five criteria to be used when comparing housing.
7. Become aware of the economic costs to the landlord of a rental unit.
8. Become aware of common landlord-tenant problems and ways to circumvent them.
9. Be able to identify the economic consequences of moving out on their own.

10. Be able to enumerate the disadvantages as well as the advantages of moving out on their own.

11. Be able to identify the trade-offs they will have to make to continue living at home or to move out on their own.

12. Be able to use their decision-making skills to determine the pros and cons of rent control.

13. Be able to enumerate the trade-offs that rent control would involve.

14. Have the background to make a more rational decision regarding possible rent control in Anchorage.

15. Come to realize the veracity of TINSTAAFL.

Daily Calendar of Activities

Day 1: Warm-up questions to stimulate students' thoughts about moving out on their own. Read case study: Housing for Howard. Conduct class discussion and introduce basic economic terminology applicable.

Day 2: Review Howard's problem of yesterday. Introduce and show film "You Choose - Scarcity and Personal Decision Making." Discuss film and the decision-making process demonstrated therein.

Day 3: Review movie, then pass out Decision-Making grids. Groups of students select one housing alternative to study further by choosing various alternatives and evaluating them.

Day 4: Groups come to a consensus as to the "best" choice of housing for their own group and then present their findings and conclusions to the class. Trade-offs are introduced.

Day 5: Discussion initiated by a projection of a cartoon centers around the economic consequences of moving out on one's own. Students contribute their own ideas and determine whether the cost if fixed or variable.

Day 6: Guest speaker from large rental agency discusses economic costs of a rental unit and common landlord-tenant problems. Question and answer period follows.

Day 7: Student comments/questions on yesterday's speaker and personal experiences as renters/landlords (parents). Review of Alaska Landlord-Tenant Law. Show cartoons to stimulate interest and discussion of eviction.

Day 8: Introduce concept of rent control and elicit opinions regarding it. Distribute Rent Control Case Study. Discuss goals of rent control and goals of the community, encouraging student participation.

Day 9: Assign students various roles in Rent Control simulation and allow research time.

Day 10: Conduct actual Rent Control simulation. Allow time for debriefing - if simulation takes the entire class period, be sure to debrief the following day.

Evaluation

I utilized the housing unit in my Personal Finance class this past fall. The one change that I made was substituting a speaker on rent control for the proposed speaker on landlord-tenant problems. This was because we were fortunate enough to have Robin Rivett of the Pacific Legal Foundation (Sacramento, California) speak to the class on how rent control has impacted housing in California. Of course, we would be unable to get the same speaker again. He did, however, provide an excellent introduction to the rent control portion of the housing unit and stimulated much interest among the students. After assigning the students to represent either the pro- or anti-rent control factions, each student had to come up with a profile of who whey were (some of those profiles are included). They conducted a mock trial with everyone in the class taking a position either as judge, bailiff, attorney, or witness. The students took their roles very seriously, researched rent control at U.A.A. and represented well thought-out arguments. Some took their positions too seriously, letting differing opinions erupt several times into ill feelings. The judge wisely rendered a verdict that compromised both positions and most felt was fair. Fortunately, I had served one week of jury duty shortly before so that I was familiar with court procedure and we tried to make the trial as realistic as possible (for example, rising when the judge entered the "courtroom", etc.).

Overall, I feel that this housing unit was a valuable addition to my Personal Finance course. The students were quite interested because it provided them with information which they felt would be of value to them in the near future. Most of the information was directly applicable to them and their community. The rent control portion gave them some "food for thought" as they soon faced the decision as to whether or not Anchorage should have rent control. Hopefully, this unit provided them with some understanding of the economic and social concepts involved.

INTERIOR CRISIS

A Secondary Level Economics Unit

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Introduction

Interior Crisis was designed for correlating social studies and language arts skills. The social studies content can be used as a vehicle for introducing, practicing and sharpening such English skills as creative writing, research, interview, and oral reports.

The purpose of this teaching unit was to introduce the students to the Fairbanks and interior economy. Major points to be stressed were the resources available to the interior, the concept of scarcity, dependence on transportation and outside resources, and the interdependence within the community.

Narrowing the scope of the project down to a specific relatively small area is not necessary. This unit could be adapted to take in the whole state of Alaska, thus broadening the type, amount, and availability of resources. If the whole state were included in this unit, it could be divided into geographical regions and a small group of students could be assigned to deal with each region. At the end of the unit each group would report orally on resources, type of government, and survival techniques.

On the other hand, it could be adapted to suit almost any potentially isolated community in the state such as Barrow, Juneau, Bethel, etc. It could be applied to a traditional economy as well as a market economy.

Goals

Each student was expected to:

1. experience group interaction in solving problems.
2. realize the complexity of the economic system in Fairbanks.
3. compare and contrast a primitive subsistence economy with a complex capitalistic economy.
4. recognize that specialization has limited the individual's ability to provide everything for himself.

5. realize the existence of interdependence in Fairbank's economy and the dependence upon outside suppliers.

6. assess resources available and recognize how scarcity affects the use of these resources.

7. distinguish between a command economy, a traditional economy, and a market economy.

Interior Crisis

I had just arrived home from work and dropped my coat on the couch. I pulled my blouse out of my waistband and wandered into the kitchen to see what I could munch on until my tea water was boiling. While I waited for that I casually flipped on the T.V. and grabbed the box of crackers out of the cupboard. I was only listening with half an ear when someone on the tube announced a special emergency news bulletin. This one, however, was different than the usual latest election returns or attempted political assassination.

----------All communications have been severed with the outside world. Fairbanks is isolated from any other part of the world. A fatal disease has caused millions of deaths in every country.

This strain of virus has never been detected before now. It is highly communicable and death is unavoidable to any person who comes in contact with it. The few remaining scientists are baffled by its origin and composition. Speculation has been that it was an accident arrived at by spontaneous reproduction of specimen in a lab where research is being done on germ warfare. It could have originated in the United States or in the USSR.

All transportation routes into and out of the Fairbanks area are closed until future notice. The only telephone lines open are emergency lines connecting government offices and military personnel with outside sources.

Please remain calm. Do not panic. Stay in your houses. All possible preparations to cope with this situation are being handled by a special task force assembled to deal with it.

Simulation Procedure

Day 1

The crisis situation will be presented to the students in a large group presentation. It will be explained that they are the task force assembled to deal with problems arising from this situation. There will be time for questions and some discussion, then the small groups will be organized. They will be asked the question: What immediate steps would have to be taken upon being informed of the situation?

Day 2

The concept of scarcity as it pertains to the economic sitution is introduced. Large group discussion of scarcity commences. Small groups meet to assess resources needed by the community. Students will be directed in their groups to (1) list the needs of the community, with the most important ones first. (2) assess what is available in the area to help meet these needs. (3) consider what other alternatives are available to help meet these needs.

Day 3

Additions to list of needed resources are accepted. Sources of information about these resources are considered.

Day 4

Small groups do research on their area of investigation. Each group is expected to come up with at least one outside resource person to interview, and give a report back to the class or invite the person in as a guest speaker.

Day 5

A creative writing assignment is assigned to answer the following questions.

1. What were you doing when you found out about the crisis?
2. What was your immediate reaction to the information?
3. What plans did you make for the survival of you and your family?
4. What problems came up that you were ill-equipped to handle?
5. How did you deal with these problems?
6. How and where did you get your food, clothing, shelter, energy?
7. Do you think you could survive this crisis? If so, what changes would take place in your life?

Day 6

Three different types of economies (command, market, and traditional) are discussed.

Day 7

Guest speaker or speakers from Fairbanks Native Association or Alaska Studies discuss a subsistence economy in Alaska's interior.

Day 9

Specialization and interdependence are introduced.

Day 10

Small groups consider the type of government that should exist.

Days 11-15

The last week provides for group oral presentations, guest speakers and final discussion.

Day 16

Teacher prepared questions are answered and the creative writing assignment is completed.

Day 17

The class is debriefed. Some creative writing assignments are read aloud.

Evaulation

Evaluation was based on the following:

1. An oral presentation by each group.

2. The creative writing exercise.

Students were evaluated in both social studies and English.